(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI ARJUN SINGH): (a) to (c). The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) was established in September, 1985 by an Act of Parliament for the introduction and promotion of the Open University and Distance Education systems in the educational pattern of the country and for the coordination and determination of standards in such systems. The University has established an extensive delivery system through its Regional and Study Centres situated in different parts of the country. Study Centres of IGNOU have been provided with accommodation by existing eduational institutions. They generally function in the evenings and on holidays.

The Study Centre at Kavaratti in Lakshadweep was established in October, 1989 and is located in the Jawaharlal Nehru College. It caters to about 100 students who are enrolled in IGNOU's Bachelor Degree Programme and the Certificate Course in Food and Nutrition. According to IGNOU the Study Centre at Kavaratti is functioning satisfactorily.

Deforestation in Assam

1887 SHRI DWARAKA NATH DAS: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government are aware that deforestation is going on unabated in Karimganj and Hailakandi districts of Assam; and

(b) the steps being taken to check this deforestation and arrange for speedy afforestation in that area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a). The State Government reports that no deforestation has taken place in the reserved forests of Karimganj and Hailakandi districts in Assam, except for some sporadic incidents of encroachments;

(b) Appropriate action has been taken to stop encroachments and felling of trees in the reserved forest area. Moreover, massive afforestation under 20-point programme has been taken up in the degraded forests.

Clearing of Baggages at Airports

1888. SHRI N. DENNIS: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether the procedures for clearing baggages at the airports have been revised;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether private contractors have been appointed to supply manpower to clear the baggage of passengers at the airports; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND TOURISM (SHRI MADHAVRAO SCINDIA): (a) and (b). Yes, Sir. The Customs under Department of Revenue have made certain procedural changes for speedy clearance of baggages to ensure better passenger facilitation.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Rail Link between Gadag-Harihar (Karnataka)

1889. SHRIMATI BASAVARAJESWARI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state: